

Towns County Middle School

2022-2023

Student Handbook



Dr. Connie Hobbs, Principal
Dr. Darren Berrong, Superintendent

TCMS
1400 US Hwy 76 E
Hiawassee, GA 30546
(706) 896-4131
www.townscountyschools.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. SCHOOL INFORMATION	3
Bell Schedule	
Mission Statement	
TCMS Faculty and Staff	
Guide for Students	
School Address and Phone Numbers	
Non-discrimination	
Title I School Designation	
McKinney-Vento Homeless Program	
Overview Parent-Student Rights	
Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)	
Tobacco Free School	
Equity in Sports Act	
Hospital/Homebound	
Policy or Rule Changes	
II. ATTENDANCE.....	16
III. DISCIPLINE PLAN	24
Student Code of Conduct	
Definition of Terms	
Drug Screening Policy	
Student Dress Code	
School Bus Transportation Code of Conduct	
IV. GENERAL STUDENT INFORMATION.....	38
Change of Address	
Eligibility Rules	
Food Services	
Insurance	
Lockers	
Lost and Found	
Medication & Health Needs	
Money and Valuables	
Phone Usage	
Visitors	
Withdrawal Procedures	
Internet & E-Mail Use	
V. EMERGENCY PROCEDURES.....	46
Snow and Other Emergency Conditions	
VI. SCHOOL CALENDAR AND FORMS TO BE RETURNED....	47

I. SCHOOL INFORMATION

TCMS REGULAR BELL SCHEDULE

6 th grade Connections	8:00-9:25
7 th grade Connections	11:10-12:35
8 th grade Connections	9:30-11:05
6 th Grade Lunch	12:00-12:25
7 th Grade Lunch	12:35-12:55
8 th Grade Lunch	12:15-12:40
Buses Leave	3:04

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Towns County Middle School is to inspire every teacher and student to think, to learn, and to achieve at their highest potential.

VISION STATEMENT

The vision of TCMS, in partnership with the family and community, is to provide an educational foundation within a student centered learning environment that promotes integrity, self-worth, and life-long learning.

TOWNS COUNTY MIDDLE SCHOOL BELIEFS STATEMENT

We Believe:

Quality education depends upon the school, parents and community working together.

All students can learn.

The school provides the opportunity for each student to achieve his/her maximum potential.

Teachers are facilitators of learning who develop and utilize innovative and relevant teaching strategies.

The school promotes and maintains a safe and healthy learning environment.

The curriculum includes areas of learning which integrate technology in assisting students to become productive members in a global society through academic, exploratory connections and in state-of-the-art lab settings.

TOWNS COUNTY MIDDLE SCHOOL FACULTY AND STAFF

<u>NAME</u>	<u>POSITION</u>
Ms. Kerri Abernathy	7 th Grade English Language Arts
Mrs. Krystal Adams	Special Education
Ms. Gina Chambers	6 th Grade English Language Arts
Mrs. Phyllis Clemons	Book Keeper
Ms. Sarah Ewing	Art Connections
Mr. Johnny Eyrich	7 th Grade Math
Mr. Todd Flanagan	Agriculture Connections
Mr. Ken Hamilton	Computer Science/Robotics
Dr. Connie Hobbs	Principal
Mr. Jason Holdaway	Special Education Paraprofessional
Mrs. Lesia Johnson	8 th Grade English Language Arts
Mrs. Allison Judd	Band Connections
Ms. Sheena Kendall	6 th Grade Social Studies
Mrs. Sherri Livingston	Special Education Paraprofessional
Mr. Jason McClure	Technology/Business Connections
Mrs. Heather Nichols	8 th Grade Science
Mrs. Lana Parker	Counselor
Mrs. Rachel Queen	Special Education
Ms. Joyce Rogers	Receptionist
Mrs. Kerry Rogers	6 th Grade Math
Mrs. Lauren Rogers	Special Education
Mrs. Brandy Roquemore	Interventions Paraprofessional
Mr. Tim Rosser	7 th Grade Social Studies
Ms. Averi Rountree	8 th Grade Math
Mrs. Heidi Smallwood	Special Education Paraprofessional
Mrs. Sandra Shook	Media Specialist
Mrs. Diane Taylor	In-School Suspension
Mr. Shea Taylor	6 th Grade Science
Mr. Rollie Thomas	7 th Grade Science
Mrs. Beatrice Thurman	Records Clerk
Mr. Chris Vardo	8 th Grade Social Studies
Ms. Cynthia Wood	Media Clerk
Mr. Evan Woodard	Health/PE Connections

GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

IF YOU NEED

Athletics Information

Attendance, Check In/Out

Band

Discipline Information

Fees and Fines

Grievance

Gifted Education Information

Guidance/Counseling

Lost and Found

Lunch Room

Medical Attention / Medications

Sports Equity

Section 504 Grievance

Telephone

Testing

To Report Vandalism

Transcript Request

Withdrawal from School

GO TO

Mr. Hamilton

Ms. Rogers, Main Office

Mrs. Judd, Room 210

Main Office

Main Office

Teacher; Dr. Hobbs, Principal

Gifted Procedures Manual on School System Web Site

Mrs. Parker

Main Office; Lunchroom Lost & Found Rack

Mrs. Mullins or Mrs. Dills, Cafeteria

Mrs. Flanagan, Elementary School Clinic

Dr. Berrong, BOE Office

Mrs. Chastain, Office

Main Office

Mrs. S. Moss, BOE Office

Administrator, SRO Officer, Room 205

Mrs. Thurman, Main Office

Mrs. Thurman, Main Office

SCHOOL ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBERS

Address and phone:

**Towns County Schools
1400 U.S. Highway 76 East
Hiawassee, Georgia 30546**

Phone: (706) 896-4131

FAX: (706) 896-6628

Personnel:

**Dr. Connie Hobbs, Principal Ext. 1011
Joyce Rogers, Receptionist, Attendance Ext. 1000
Beatrice Thurman, Registrar Ext. 1016
Phyllis Clemons, Bookkeeper Ext. 1014
Sandra Shook, Media Specialist Ext. 1702
Dr. Victoria Stroud, Director of Special Education Ext. 1050
Stephanie Moss, Curriculum, Personnel & Testing 706-896-2279
Ken Hamilton, Athletics Director Ext. 1102
Brandy Roquemore, Interventions Ext. 1122**

OTHER DIRECT TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

Board of Education.....(706) 896-2279

Board of Education FAX.....(706) 896-2632

Bus Shop.....(706) 896-3843

NON-DISCRIMINATION

In the operation of the Towns County School System no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, age, national origin, disability or sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination in educational programs, activities or employment practices. The following staff persons have been designated to field questions, comments and complaints regarding instances of alleged discrimination:

Title II Coordinator	Mrs. Stephanie Moss	896-2279
Title VI Coordinator	Mrs. Erica Chastain	896-4131
Title IX Coordinator	Dr. Darren Berrong	896-2279
Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator	Dr. Victoria Stroud	896-4131
Carl Perkins Act Coordinator	Mrs. Melissa McConnell	896-4131
Section 504 Coordinator	Mrs. Erica Chastain	896-4131
Equity in Sports Act Coordinator	Dr. Darren Berrong	896-2279

Title I School Designation

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 requires that parents or guardians who have children attending a Title I school be notified of how well their school is preparing its students for college and/or a career, as well as the school's designation status under Georgia's ESEA Flexibility Waiver. Under Georgia's ESEA Flexibility Waiver, certain Title I schools are designated as Reward, Priority, Focus, or Alert schools.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Program Overview

Towns County Schools adhere to the guiding principle that all eligible children and youth who reside within the Towns County are entitled to a free, appropriate public education. Students identified as "homeless" or "in transition" will be given a full opportunity to meet state and local academic achievement standards and will be included in state- and district-wide assessments and accountability systems. Towns County Schools will ensure that children and youth in transition are free from discrimination, segregation, and harassment. Any information regarding each student's homeless status shall be handled in a confidential and professional manner by school and system personnel.

Definitions:

In accordance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act and State Board Rule 160-5-1-.28 (JBC), the term "Homeless Child and Youth" is defined as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including children and youth who are:

- Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reasons;
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodation;
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- Abandoned in hospitals;
- Awaiting foster care placement;
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, or bus or train stations, or similar settings;
- Sleeping in primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, regular sleeping accommodations; and,
- Migratory or living in the circumstances described above.

A child or youth shall be considered to be experiencing homelessness for as long as he or she is in a living situation described above. Unaccompanied youth is a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, who is in transition as defined above.

Towns County Schools shall request proof of residency of all students enrolling in Towns County Schools. If a student is identified as homeless by definition, the school will enroll the student immediately. School personnel will contact the Homeless Liaison immediately upon enrollment of any student experiencing homelessness. Homeless students may be enrolled by a parent or the district's liaison. Enrollment may not be denied or delayed due to lack of any document normally required for enrollment including, but not limited to, the following:

- Proof of residency
- Transcripts/school records
- Immunization or immunization/health/medical/physical records
- Proof of guardianship
- Birth Certificate
- Any other document requirements
- Unpaid school fees
- Lack of uniforms or clothing that conforms to dress codes
- Any factor related to the student's living situation

Services:

The Towns County Schools Homeless Liaison shall coordinate with any/all local social service agencies that provide services to homeless children and youths and their families; other local school systems on the transfer of student records; and state and local housing agencies responsible for comprehensive housing affordability strategies. Children and youth experiencing homelessness shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school selected, including:

- Transportation - Homeless students are entitled to transportation to his/her school of origin or the school where he/she is to be enrolled.
- Title I Services- Educational services for which the student meeting eligibility criteria, including special education and related services and programs for English language learners
- CTAE education programs and extracurricular activities
- Gifted and talented programs
- School nutrition programs and automatic eligibility for free meals
- Before-school and after-school program when applicable
- Parental Involvement Activities

If a dispute arises over any issue regarding homeless students, the child or youth in transition shall be enrolled immediately to the school in which enrollment is sought pending resolution of the dispute.

The student shall also have the same rights to all appropriate educational services, transportation, free meals, and Title I services while the dispute is pending. The parent or guardian shall be informed of Towns County Schools decision and the appeal rights in writing. The System's liaison will carry out dispute resolution as provided by state rule. Unaccompanied youth will also be enrolled pending resolution of the dispute. If the matter is not resolved at the local level, the parent may request to exercise the right for a review of the dispute and decision by the Georgia Department of Education in accordance with Dispute Resolution Guidelines and Procedures provided by the Georgia Department of Education which are available on the Georgia Department of Education's web site.

Contact information: **Erica Chastain**

Homeless Liaison
Towns County Schools
1400 Hwy 76 East
Hiawassee, GA 30546
(706)896-4131 ext. 1134
echastain@townscountyschools.org

GUIDANCE

The school counselor works in the office, classrooms and small groups, coordinating classroom guidance, career awareness classes, personalized programs, student placement, new student orientation, and school-wide testing. The counselor consults with parents in regard to social, emotional, and educational concerns experienced by their children. Consulting with teachers is necessary to help plan activities and programs for individual growth and classroom policies, curriculum and programs for individual growth and classroom management. The counselor provides support during personal crisis, develops skills for individual growth and classroom problems, helps students set positive goals, exercise self-responsibility and improve academic progress. Counseling is provided to facilitate discussions which develop communication skills that help students understand themselves and others.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent-teacher conferences may be arranged between 3:05-3:30 PM or during the teacher's planning period by sending an e-mail or letter to the teacher or by telephoning the school office.

GENERAL CURRICULUM

Towns County Middle School operates on the semester system. This program provides for two semesters of approximately 90 days each during the regular school year. Report Cards are given to all students at the end of each nine-week grading period. Progress Reports are given midway between Report Cards. Parents can monitor grades at all times by accessing the school website and using their access code. Codes are dispersed through the main office. Parents may also receive grades upon request by sending their e-mail address to the main office.

GRADING SCALE

100 – 90 = A

80 – 89 = B

70 – 79 = C

Grades below 70 = F

I=Incomplete Students receiving an incomplete for a semester's work will have up to 10 days to make up work after returning to school. For Honor Roll Purposes: All A Honor Roll is given to students earning a 90 and above average in all subjects. AB Honor Roll is given to students who have earned an 85 and above in all subjects, with at least a 90 or above in one academic subject.

ACCELERATION PROGRAM

Towns County Middle School students that meet criteria may participate in the accelerated program. This program will provide an opportunity for students to earn a High School Credit during their eighth grade term. More information on this program may be obtained from the principal or school counselor.

PROMOTION REQUIREMENTS

Towns County Middle School students must pass three out of four academic subjects and three out of four exploratory-connection classes. For all subjects, a passing grade will be 70 or higher. Student report card grades will reflect numerical grades for academic classes and numerical or letter grades for exploratory-connection classes.

Georgia Milestones Assessment System

The Georgia Milestones Assessment System (Georgia Milestones) is an assessment program that is comprehensive and spans grades 3 through high school. This assessment program measures how well students have learned the state-adopted content standards. These standards cover the subjects of language arts, mathematics, science and social studies.

PARENT – STUDENT RIGHTS

Parent Right-to-Know Information

At **Towns County Middle School**, we are very proud of our teachers and feel they are ready for the coming school year and are prepared to give your child a high-quality education. By law, Local Education Agencies are required to notify parents of their “Right to Know” the professional qualifications of the student’s classroom teachers. These regulations allow you to learn more about your child’s teachers’ training and credentials. We are happy to provide this information to you. At any time, you may ask:

Whether the student’s teacher -

- has met state qualifications and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction;
- is teaching under emergency or provisional status through which State qualification or licensing criteria have been waived; and
- is teaching in the field of discipline of the certification of the teacher.

You may also ask whether your child receives help from a paraprofessional. If your child receives this assistance, we can provide you with information about the paraprofessional’s qualifications. Our staff is committed to helping your child develop the academic knowledge and critical thinking he/she needs to succeed in school and beyond. That commitment includes making sure that all of our teachers and paraprofessionals are highly skilled.

If you have any questions about your child’s assignment to a teacher or paraprofessional, please contact Dr. Connie Hobbs at Towns County Middle School at 706-896-4131 ext. 1011 or email at chobbs@townscountyschools.org.

Parent – Student Rights

Parents and students have certain rights under Federal Law (20 U.S.C., 1232h) commonly known as the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment. Pursuant to this law, all instructional materials, including teacher’s manual, films, tapes, or other supplemental materials which will be used in connection with any survey, analysis, or evaluation shall be available for inspection by parents or guardians of the students. In addition parents have the right upon request to review before administration or use of protected information surveys of students and instruments used to collect personal information from students for marketing, sales, or other distribution purposes. In addition consent will be required before students are asked to submit to a survey, analysis, or evaluation funded in whole or in part by a program of the U.S Department of Education that reveals any information concerning any of the following protected areas:

Political affiliations, mental or psychological problems potentially embarrassing to the student or his/her family, sex behavior or attitudes, illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating and demeaning behavior; critical appraisals of other individuals with whom students have close family relationships, legally recognized privileged or analogous relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians, or ministers; or income without prior written consent of the parent.

Parents and eligible students have the right to receive notice and an opportunity to opt a student out of any other protected survey regardless of funding; any non-emergency, invasive physical exam or screening required as a condition of attendance, administered by the school or its agent, and not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of a student, except for hearing, vision, or scoliosis screenings, or any physical exam or screening provided by state law; and activities involving collection, disclosure, or use of personal information obtained from students for marketing or to sell or otherwise distribute the information to others.

Parents or eligible students who believe their rights have been violated may file a complaint with:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202-5929

Student reporting acts of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct

"20-2-751.7.(a) The Professional Standards Commission shall establish a state mandated process for students to follow in reporting instances of alleged inappropriate behavior by a teacher, administrator, or other school employee toward a student which shall not prohibit the ability of a student to report the incident to law enforcement authorities. Each local school system shall be required to implement and follow such state mandated process and shall include the mandated process in student handbooks and in employee handbooks or policies.

(a) Any student (or parent or friend of a student) who has been the victim of an act of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct by a teacher, administrator or other school system employee is urged to make an oral report of the act to any teacher, counselor or administrator at his/her school.

(b) Any teacher, counselor or administrator receiving a report of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct of a student by a teacher, administrator or other employee shall make an oral report of the incident immediately by telephone or otherwise to the school principal or principal's designee, and shall submit a written report of the incident to the school principal or principal's designee within 24 hours. *If the principal is the person accused of the sexual abuse or sexual misconduct, the oral and written reports should be made to the superintendent or the superintendent's designee.*

(c) Any school principal or principal's designee receiving a report of sexual abuse as defined in O.C.G.A. 19-7-5 shall make an oral report immediately, but in no case later than 24 hours from the time there is reasonable cause to believe a child has been abused. The report should be made by telephone and followed by a written report in writing, if requested, to a child welfare agency providing protective services, as designated by the Department of Human Resources, or, in the absence of such agency, to an appropriate police authority or district attorney.

Reports of acts of sexual misconduct against a student by a teacher, administrator or other employee not covered by O.C.G.A. 19-7-5 or 20-2-1184 shall be investigated immediately by school or system personnel. If the investigation of the allegation of sexual misconduct indicates a reasonable cause to believe that the report of sexual misconduct is valid, the school principal or principal's designee shall make an immediate written report to the superintendent and the Professional Standards Commission Ethics Division.

NOTICE TO PARENT/GUARDIANS AND ELIGIBLE STUDENTS OF RIGHTS UNDER THE FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT (FERPA)

FERPA affords parents and eligible students (over 18 years of age or attending a postsecondary institution) certain rights with respect to the student's education records. These rights are:

- (1) The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days after the school receives a request for access. Parents or eligible students should submit to the principal a written request that identifies the records they wish to inspect. The principal or designee will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected
- (2) The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes is inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA. To request amendment of a student record, parents or eligible students should submit to the school principal a written request, specifying the part of the record they want changed and why it is inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights. If the school decides not to amend the record, it will notify the parents or eligible students of the decision and inform them of their right to a hearing. Additional information regarding the hearing procedure will be provided with the notification of the right to a hearing.
- (3) The right to provide written consent before the school discloses personally identifiable information (PII) from the student's education records, except to the extent that disclosure without prior written consent is authorized by FERPA and its implementing regulations at 34 C.F.R § 99.31. One exception that permits disclosure without consent is to school officials with legitimate educational interest. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an educational record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility. A school official is a person employed by the school district as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including school nurses and school resource officers); a member of the school board; a person or company with whom the district has contracted to perform a specific task (such as attorney, auditor, medical consultant, volunteer, or other party to whom the school district has out-sourced services, such as electronic data storage; or a parent or student serving on an official committee (such as a disciplinary or grievance committee) or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. The district allows school officials to access only student records in which they have a legitimate educational interest. School officials remain under the district's control with regard to the use and maintenance of PII, which may be used only for the purpose for which disclosure was made, and cannot be released to other parties without authorization. Upon request, the district discloses education records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll, or is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes of the student's enrollment or transfer.
- (4) FERPA requires the school district, with certain exceptions to obtain written consent prior to the disclosure of personally identifiable information from the student's education records. However the district may disclose appropriate designated "directory information" without written consent, unless the parent or eligible student has advised the district to the contrary in accordance with district procedures. The primary purpose of directory information is to allow the school to include this type of information from the student's education records in certain school publications, such as the annual yearbook, graduation or sports activity programs, honor roll or other recognition lists, or on websites or social media sites affiliated with the school or school district.

Towns County Schools has designated the following information as directory information:

- a. Student's name, address and telephone number;

- b. Student's date and place of birth;
- c. Student's participation in official school clubs and sports;
- d. Weight and height of student if he/she is a member of an athletic team;
- e. Dates of attendance at schools within the school district;
- f. Honors and awards received during the time enrolled in the district's schools;
- g. Photograph; and
- h. Grade level

Unless you, as a parent/guardian or eligible student, request otherwise, this information may be disclosed to the public upon request. In addition, two federal laws require school districts receiving federal financial assistance to provide military recruiters, upon request, with students' names, addresses, and telephone numbers unless parents have advised the school district that they do not want their student's information disclosed without their prior written consent. You have the right to refuse to allow all or any part of the above information to be designated as directory information and to refuse to allow it to be disclosed to the public upon request without your prior written consent. If you wish to exercise this right you must notify the principal of the school at which the student is enrolled in writing within 10 days after officially enrolling in school or within 10 days of the date of the release of this notice.

- (5) You are also notified that from time to time students may be photographed, videoed, or interviewed by the news media at school or at some school activity or event. The principal will take reasonable steps to control access to students by the media or other individuals not affiliated with the school district. However, your submission of a written objection does not constitute a guarantee that your student will not be photographed, videoed, or interviewed, or that such information will not be posted on websites or social media sites not affiliated with the school or district, or in circumstances which are not within the knowledge or control of the principal.
- (6) You have the right to file with the U.S. Department of Education a complaint concerning alleged failures by the school district to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA is:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

- (7) The Georgia Student Data Privacy, Accessibility, and Transparency Act affords parents and eligible students the right to file a complaint with the school district regarding a possible violation of rights under O.C.G.A. § 20-2-667 or under other federal or state student data privacy and security laws.

Such complaints may be filed with: Trena Stroud, Technology Director

Towns County Schools
67 Lakeview Circle, Suite C
Hiawassee, GA 30546

SECTION 504

Any student, parent or guardian ("grievant") may request an impartial hearing relating to the school system's actions or inactions regarding their child's identification, evaluation, or educational placement under Section 504. Requests for an impartial hearing must be in writing to the school system's Section 504 Coordinator, Erica Chastain. An oral request does not alleviate the school system's obligation to provide an impartial hearing. The school system's Section 504 Coordinator shall assist the grievant in completing the written Request for Hearing if needed or requested. The Section 504 Coordinator, Erica Chastain, may be contacted by phone at (706) 896-4131 ext. 1134 or by e-mail at echastain@townscountyschools.org. Copies of the 504 Procedural Safeguards and Notice of Rights of Students and Parents under Section 504 may be found at the system website or may be picked up at the central office or at any of the school offices.

TOBACCO FREE SCHOOL

In an effort to promote a healthy lifestyle for our young people, Towns County School System has banned the use of tobacco on campus. Towns County Schools is a 100% tobacco free school system. This includes the use of tobacco products during all school functions by students and adults. We appreciate everyone's help in setting a positive example for the students of Towns County.

The Towns County School System does not discriminate on the basis of age, sex, race, color, religion, national origin, or disability in educational programs, activities, or employment.

EQUITY IN SPORTS ACT

In accordance with the Equity in Sports Act, O.C.G.A. & 20-2-315, Towns County School System does not discriminate on the basis of gender in its athletic programs. Dr. Darren Berrong can be reached at the Towns County Board of Education Office, 67 Lakeview Circle, Suite C, Hiawasse, GA 30546 or by phone at (706) 892-2279.

HOSPITAL/HOMEBOUND

Hospital/homebound instruction are a teaching service provided to students having a medically diagnosed physical condition which prevents school attendance for a period of ten (10) days or more. Students eligible must be anticipated to be absent for a minimum of ten (10) consecutive days unless a physician certifies that the student has a chronic health condition causing the student to be absent for intermittent periods of time during the school year. Hospital/homebound services are not available in cases of expulsion or out-of-school suspension.

POLICY OR RULE CHANGES

The Towns County Board of Education and Towns County Middle School reserves the right to change policies, rules, and procedures without prior notification. The Towns County Board of Education and Towns County Middle School do not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, handicap, age, religion or ethnic origin in educational programs, activities, employment or admission to its programs.

Complaint Procedures under Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

Grounds for a Complaint:

Any individual, organization or agency (complainant) may file a complaint with the Towns County Board of Education if that individual, organization or agency believes and alleges that a violation of Federal statute or regulation that applies to a program under ESEA has occurred. The complaint must allege a violation that occurred not more than one (1) year prior to the date that the complaint is received unless a longer period is reasonable because the violation is considered systemic or ongoing.

Federal Programs for Which Complaints Can Be Filed:

- a. Title I, Part A
- b. Title I, Part C
- c. Title II, Part A
- d. Title III, Part A
- e. Title VI, Part B
- f. McKinney-Vento Act

Complaints Originating at the Local Level:

As part of its Assurances within ESEA program grant applications and pursuant to Section 9306 of ESEA, an LEA accepting federal funds must have local written procedures for the receipt and resolution of complaints alleging violations of law in the administration of covered programs. Therefore, a complaint should not be filed with the Georgia Department of Education until every effort has been made to resolve through local written complaint procedures. If the complainant has tried to file a complaint with Towns County Schools to no avail, the complainant must provide the Georgia Department of Education written proof of their attempt to resolve the issue with Towns County Schools.

Filing a Complaint:

A formal complaint must be filed in writing and signed by the complainant. The complaint must include the following:

1. A statement that Towns County Schools has violated a requirement of a Federal statute or regulation that applies to an applicable program;
2. The date on which the violation occurred;
3. The facts on which the statement is based and the specific requirement allegedly violated (include citation to the Federal statute or regulation);
4. A list of the names and telephone numbers of individuals who can provide additional information;
5. Whether a complaint has been filed with any other government agency, and if so, which agency;
6. Copies of all applicable documents supporting the complainant's position; and
7. The address of the complainant

The complaint must be addressed to:

Erica Chastain, Director of Federal Programs
Towns County Schools
67 Lakeview Circle
Hiawassee, GA 30546

Investigation of Complaint:

Within ten (10) days of receipt of the complaint, Towns County Schools will issue a Letter of Acknowledgement to the complainant that contains the following information:

- 1.The date Towns County Schools received the complaint;
- 2.How the complainant may provide additional information;
- 3.A statement of the ways in which Towns County Schools may investigate or address the complaint; and
- 4.Any other pertinent information.

If additional information or an investigation is necessary, the school system will have sixty (60) days from receipt of the information or completion of the investigation to issue a Letter of Findings. If the Letter of Findings indicates that a violation has been found, corrective action will be required and timelines for completion will be included. The 60-day timelines may be extended, if exceptional circumstances exist. The Letter of Findings will be sent directly to the complainant.

Right of Appeal:

If the complaint cannot be resolved at the local level, the complainant has the right to request review of the decision by the Georgia Department of Education. For complaints filed pursuant to Section 9503 (20 U.S.C. 7883, complaint process for participation of private school children), a complainant may appeal to the Georgia Department of Education no later than thirty (30) days from the date on which the complainant receives the Letter of Findings. The appeal must be accompanied by a copy of the school system's decision and include a complete statement of the reasons supporting the appeal.

II. STUDENT ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL

School System Procedures

Towns County School System will monitor student attendance daily. Codes for attendance used in the student records database will be consistent between schools to indicate excused and unexcused absences, tardies, early dismissals, and in-school and out-of-school suspensions, etc.

Excused absences shall be delineated by the reason for the excuse. The Towns County Board of Education will adopt policy and procedure outlining the specific steps to be taken to monitor and address the attendance of all students. Each school will create a building level procedure in accordance with this policy based on the following definitions.

EXCUSED ABSENCE

In order for a student to have an excused absence, a written excuse from the parent or doctor must be presented to the Attendance Clerk within three days after the absences. These excuses will be maintained in the student's attendance folder. Based on State Board of Education rule, the following may be considered excused:

1. A student having a personal illness such that his or her attendance in school would endanger the student's health or the health of others. In the instance of head lice, two days will be excused for treatment. When sent home by the school nurse, that day's absence will be entered as medically excused. If the student is sent home due to having a fever 100.4 or higher, the following day's absence will also be medically excused.
2. A serious illness, death, or emergency in a student's immediate family necessitating absence from school.

3. A court order or an order by a governmental agency, including pre-induction physical examinations for service in the armed forces, mandating absence from school.
4. Observation of religious events or holidays that necessitate absence from school.
5. Conditions rendering attendance impossible or hazardous to student health or safety.
6. A period not to exceed one day is allowed for registering to vote or voting in a public election.
7. Excused status can be obtained in advance for special circumstances at the discretion of the principal.
8. A student whose parent is in military service in the armed forces of the United States or the National Guard and such parent has been called to duty for or is on leave from overseas deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting shall be granted excused absences up to a maximum of five school days per school year to visit with his or her parent prior to such parents deployment or during such parents leave.
9. Students shall be counted present when they are serving as pages of the Georgia General Assembly and/or while representing the school in an activity approved by the school and/or the Towns County Board of Education.
10. Students in foster care shall be counted present when attending court proceedings related to their foster care.

UNEXCUSED ABSENCE

A student is absent any time he or she is missing from school or from any assigned class or school activity for reasons other than those stated above and/or has not provided a valid written excuse within three days.

Parents may provide up to five (5) written notes for absences for reasons listed under “EXCUSED ABSENCES”. Written notes after five will be considered unexcused unless reviewed by the principal and excused at his/her discretion.

TRUANT

Any student subject to compulsory attendance who during the school calendar year has more than five (5) days of unexcused absences in a school year is considered truant.

TARDY

A student is tardy when he or she arrives at an assigned place after the designated time. Repeated or habitual tardiness is disruptive to the orderly instructional process and should be avoided.

EARLY DISMISSAL

An early dismissal is when a student is checked out before the end of the school day. Repeated or habitual early dismissals are disruptive to the orderly instructional process and should be avoided.

ATTENDANCE RECOVERY

Opportunities may be provided for students to make up time missed and receive academic assistance during the regular school schedule due to tardies and absences.

IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION

Removal of a student from their regular classes and assignment of the student to a location isolated from their peers.

HOSPITAL/HOMEBOUND

A hospitalized or homebound student who receives three hours of instruction per week from a certified hospital/homebound teacher may be counted present at the school for that week.

NOTIFICATION OF PARENTS

Upon enrollment and registration each school year, parents/guardians shall be given notice of State Compulsory Attendance Law pursuant to O.C.G.A. Code 20-2-690.1 and Towns County Board of Education school attendance policy. The school will make reasonable efforts to ensure receipt and comprehension of the policy by requesting signatures from parents/guardians that this notice was received and understood. At the middle and high schools, students will also receive this notice and provide signature. At the elementary level, this notice will be received by students who have reached age ten (10) or above by September 1 of that school year. This notice should also be included in each school's Code of Conduct.

ATTENDANCE SUPPORT TEAM

Each school will establish an Attendance Support Team (AST) which will be chaired by the Attendance Coordinator and include one or more of the following as its members: the principal of each school or his/her designee, School Counselor, SRO/DARE officer, appropriate members of the Attendance Protocol Committee, and faculty having direct contact with the parents/guardians and/or providing direct service to the specific student(s) to be discussed. Each school's AST will meet when deemed necessary by the attendance protocol to discuss excessive absenteeism and will be responsible for implementing and monitoring policy to reduce tardiness, early dismissals, and truancy. Parents/guardians shall be invited, as well as encouraged, to attend these meetings. For purposes of this Protocol, the term "parent" may include any adult who has charge and control over the child, including a biological, adoptive, foster, step-parent, a guardian, or any other person who has control or charge of the child's attendance at school. In this regard, two parents residing in the same household with the child are equally responsible for the child's attendance at school.

Daily attempts shall be made to call parents of absent students. In cases known to involve joint or shared custody or guardianship of a student, efforts should be made to contact all individuals with custodial rights. This standard shall also apply to steps hereinafter.

MIDDLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

	After 3-5 Unexcused	After 5-7 Unexcused	After 10 or more	After 15 or more “TOTAL”
Absences	Parent Contact made by Administrator	Attendance Support Team Meeting. Parent Contact made by Attendance Coordinator	Referral to Truancy Court	Students absent more than 15 days, regardless of excuse, in a school year might be retained if student does not attempt attendance recovery

- At three (3) unexcused absences, the principal or his/her designee will contact the parent either by phone or in writing. This serves to notify the parent(s) of attendance to date.
- At five (5) unexcused absences the Attendance Coordinator will send a letter via certified or registered mail to the parent(s) along with a copy of the attendance law mandated by the state. This letter will request the parent to contact the Attendance Coordinator to arrange an Attendance Support Team (AST) meeting and will require a signature of receipt.
- At seven (7) unexcused absences and/or ten (10) unexcused absences total the Attendance Coordinator will call the parent(s) to investigate and request an AST meeting to review the case and consider making a referral.
- At ten (10) unexcused absences, the Attendance Coordinator and School Administrator(s) will make a court referral if one has not been made previously.

Attendance Coordinator Timeline

- ⇒ Attendance Coordinator will meet with the student and/or attempt a home visit to explore the reasons for excessive absences and to recommend avenues to the student and family for addressing the cause of absences.
- ⇒ Upon review of attendance records, parent contacts made by school staff, and other pertinent information, the Attendance Coordinator will set an AST meeting to review the case and notify the parents and appropriate AST members.
- ⇒ After the Attendance Support Team meeting, the Attendance Coordinator will monitor the decisions/contract completed and take whatever actions were deemed necessary by the committee.
- ⇒ If upon further investigation and the determination of the Attendance Support Team the student's attendance has not improved and/or the decisions/contract terms not been fulfilled, the Attendance Coordinator will refer parent(s)/ guardian(s) of students ages six (6) to eleven (11) to either the Juvenile Court for Educational Deprivation, or to the Magistrate Court for Failure to comply with Compulsory Attendance, and/or (c) refer the family to the Department of Family and Children Services for deprivation/educational neglect. Students ages twelve (12) to sixteen (16) will be referred to Juvenile Court for Truancy and/or (d) notify the Department of Motor Vehicles as specified in O.C.G.A. 40-5-2 regarding denial of driving permits and/or licenses for students age fourteen and above. ***NOTE: In most cases, Court referrals will be made at this point or at the next unexcused absence.***

- ⇒ Review end of year attendance records with each school's Principal and determine a list of active referrals for the beginning of the next school year.

Criminal Prosecution for Violation of School Attendance Law

O.C.G.A. & 20-2-690.1 requires any person in this State who has control or charge of a child between the ages of six (6) and sixteen (16) to enroll and send that child to school, including public private and home schooling.

A child is responsible to attend school and is subject to adjudication in Towns County Juvenile Court as an unruly child for violation of the statute. If a parent, guardian or other person who has control or charge of the child *causes* the child's absence, then *that* person, and not the child, is in violation of this statute. Such a violation is a misdemeanor and carries a penalty of up to \$100 fine, community service, 30 days in jail, or any combination of these penalties for each violation. The law specifies that *each* day's absence constitutes a separate offense.

A. Filing Juvenile Complaints

A juvenile complaint should be filed in the Juvenile Court of Towns County against a child who is habitually and without justification truant from school. Such a child is "unruly"/truant.

For the purposes of this Protocol, habitual truancy or absence is defined as five (5) or more days of unexcused absence from school. After seven (7) unexcused absences, the child's circumstances will be reviewed by the Attendance Support Team. At this review the following options will be discussed:

1. Refer the child and/or parent(s)/guardian(s) to the appropriate community resources.
2. Request further medical documentation if appropriate
3. File an "unruly child"/truancy complaint with the Juvenile Court of Towns County
4. Make a referral to Department of Family and Children's Services for deprivation/educational neglect.

The Attendance Coordinator will be responsible for obtaining and monitoring compliance with the recommendations of the Attendance Support Team.

B. Juvenile Justice Procedures

1. Intake Process for Juvenile Complaints
 - a. The Clerk of Juvenile Court in Towns County will immediately forward a copy of all Truancy complaints to the Intake Officer of the Department of Juvenile Justice for Towns County. The intake officer will process complaints.
 - b. Complaints will be entered into the Juvenile Tracing System and any past history will be assessed.
 - c. The Intake Officer may contact the Attendance Coordinator for any further pertinent information.
 - d. Truancy complaints will receive immediate attention and be placed on the most current Juvenile Court Calendar of arraignment.
2. Adjudication and Disposition
 - a. A youth may be placed on contract and/or probation for Truancy by the Juvenile Court Judge upon receipt of a Truancy charge. At this time, the Judge and/or the Department

of Juvenile Justice may request a Protective Order to ensure that the parent(s)/guardian(s) actively assist in the youth's compliance with court mandates and the youth's attendance at school.

- b. The Probation Officer will monitor the youth's attendance, at a minimum, on a bi-monthly basis. Further unexcused absences from school by youth will result in immediate sanction by the Department of Juvenile Justice. Upon adjudication for Truancy-related Violation of Probation, the Juvenile Court Judge will determine what further action or intervention is appropriate.
- c. Judicial truancy reviews will be held as the judge instructs from the date of the initial Truancy Contract/Probation Order for Truancy-related cases. These reviews will assess the youth's attendance at school and effectiveness of any services that may be involved to assist youth and/or family. All parties involved should be prepared to report on youth's progress at these reviews.

A Probation Order may be terminated by the Juvenile Court Judge prior to the two-year expiration date if youth's attendance and/or progress had reached a level satisfactory to all parties involved.

C. Prosecution in Juvenile Court

When it is clear that the parent is the direct cause of the child's absence, a warrant for violation of OCGA & 20-2-690.1 should be sought against the parent. In other circumstances, the Attendance Support Team may, but is not required to, take into account the following considerations when recommending a criminal warrant is sought for the parent of a child:

1. The child is under the age of 13 years
2. The child has an illness for which the parent has not been diligent in pursuing medical attention or in seeking financial assistance to procure the proper medical attention
3. The parent is absent from the home or neglectful to an extent that it hinders the child's willingness or ability to attend school.
4. The child is a deprived child.

The child and parent/guardian MUST comply with the Attendance Support Team's recommendations. Failure of the child or parent to comply with the recommendations, including, but not limited to, further unexcused absences from school, will result in juvenile adjudication of the child and/or prosecution of the parent/guardian. In any event, if the child accumulates ten (10) or more unexcused absences in any school year, the Attendance Coordinator will file a juvenile complaint. When a parent/guardian is prosecuted, regular school attendance will be assigned as a condition of bond.

Community Support

A. Law Enforcement

Each school in Towns County has access to an employee of the Towns County Sheriff's Office, either on-site or within minimal driving distance. These individuals are certified peace officers designated as "School Resource Officers." In support of improved school attendance, the School Resource Officers shall:

- ❖ Attend Attendance Support Team meetings, as appropriate
- ❖ Forward complaints against parents directly to the Sheriff's Office regarding compliance with mandatory attendance laws
- ❖ Honor any applicable school-related transportation basis, transport truant students to school.

B. School Health Services

Each school in Towns County has access to licensed staff available to serve students via an on-site clinic. Our Health Services staff shall:

- ❖ Be responsible, in cooperation with other staff, for the final determination at each school regarding when a child should be sent home early for the day, due to health related concerns, and excusing any resulting absences.
- ❖ Be available to parents for preliminary verification to the school of illness pending an appointment with a physician and advocate with physician's offices for timely appointments, as appropriate
- ❖ Follow any orders written by students' physicians regarding medication or other medical treatment to be provided during school hours.
- ❖ Coordinate immunization evaluations for Kindergarten registration and Scoliosis screens for students provided through Public Health
- ❖ Work in conjunction with Teachers, School Administrators, and Public Health to promote general health and safety for students, school staff, and the community.

C. Public Health Services

The Towns County Health Department is an integral partner in community health related to school readiness, attendance, and success. Towns County Health Department shall:

- ❖ Continue to support and promote Towns County Health Services
- ❖ Provide immunization evaluations, immunizations, and immunization records required for school enrollment
- ❖ Provide Scoliosis screens for students
- ❖ Provide various medical, dental, and prescription services, referrals, and education to students and families in Town County to promote personal and community health.

D. Mental Health Services

Avita Community Partners offer crucial support for the mental, physical, and emotional well-being of students and their families, including individual and group sessions on-site at the schools for student clients of Towns County. In support of this Protocol, Avita Community Partners shall:

- ❖ Notify and/or refer student clients to the School Counselor or Attendance Coordinator when efforts to conduct individual or group sessions at school repeatedly fail, due to absences.

- ❖ Coordinate and host regular Emergency Staffing Committee meetings, which facilitate support and treatment planning for at-risk youth, including students who are truant.
- ❖ Attend court proceedings, when appropriate, for cases involving truancy and support any court orders for treatment of emotional or family issues contributing to absences.
- ❖ Offer clinical support, when possible and appropriate, to any truancy prevention or treatment programs instituted.

In accordance with state and federal laws related to confidentiality, Avita Community Partners and Towns County Schools shall, as appropriate, obtain releases of information to allow communication as outlined above.

E. Department of Family and Children Services

The Towns County Department of Family and Children Services often provide social services to the families of truant students. During the course of an investigation or an ongoing protective service or placement case the Towns County Department of Family and Children's Services shall:

- ❖ Accept and consider information related to school attendance, behavior, and performance in reports and investigations of other suspected abuse and/or neglect
- ❖ Address school attendance in departmental case plans and safety plans
- ❖ Ensure school enrollment and regular attendance for students in emergency shelter care, temporary guardianship arranged by the Department, or foster care
- ❖ Verify involvement of the Attendance Coordinator when available attendance information indicates more than ten (10) unexcused absence
- ❖ Attend court proceedings, when necessary, for cases involving truancy and/or complaints against parents/guardians related to mandatory school attendance.

Monitoring the Protocol

To insure the written protocol procedures are followed, the Protocol Committee will meet bi-annually, as required by law. The Committee's goal will be to improve communication between agencies, encourage inter-agency cooperation, and update the protocol as necessary. Each participating agency shall monitor and evaluate compliance with this protocol and, as needed, recommend protocol revision and implementation that best meets the needs of the community and complies with Federal, State, and local statutes, as well as agency policy.

Steps to Prevent Truancy

Various measures are currently being explored to address truancy from a prevention perspective.

- ❖ The Family Connections Program in Towns County serves as a pre-adjudicatory measure. This program offers a strong family lever component of intervention against truancy.
- ❖ Towns County Student Attendance Protocol Signature Sheet
- ❖ Each student/parent is given a copy of the Attendance Procedures at the beginning of the school year in addition to the protocol being included in the Student Handbook.
- ❖ A signature page is kept in each student's attendance file showing that the parents and/or the student have received a copy of the protocol included in the student handbook.

III. DISCIPLINE PLAN

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

It is the purpose of the Board of Education to operate each school in a manner that will provide an orderly process of education and that will provide for the welfare and safety of all students who attend the schools within the district. In accordance with that purpose, the Board of Education has adopted a policy which requires all schools to adopt codes of conduct which require students to conduct themselves at all times in order to facilitate a learning environment for themselves and other students. These standards for behavior require students to respect each other and school district employees, to obey student behavior policies adopted by the Board and to obey student behavior rules established at each school within the district.

The school's primary goal is to educate, not to punish; however, when the behavior of an individual student comes in conflict with the rights of others, corrective actions may be necessary for the benefit of that individual and the school as a whole. Accordingly, students shall be governed by policies, regulations and rules set forth in the Code of Conduct.

The Code of Conduct is effective during the following times and in the following places:

- At school or on school property at any time;
- Off school grounds at any school-related activity, function or event and while traveling to and from such events;
- On school buses and at school bus stops.

Also, students may be disciplined for conduct off campus which could result in the student being criminally charged with a felony and which makes the student's continued presence at school a potential danger to persons or property at the school or which disrupts the educational process.

Major offenses including, but not limited to, drug and weapon offenses can lead to schools being named as an Unsafe School according to the provisions of State Board Rule 160-4-8-.16, Unsafe School Choice Option.

The General Assembly of Georgia requires that this code of conduct include language encouraging parents and guardians to inform their children on the consequences, including potential criminal penalties, of underage sexual conduct and crimes for which a minor can be tried as an adult.

Parents are encouraged to become familiar with the Code of Conduct and to be supportive of it in their daily communication with their children and others in the community. Parents and students are required to acknowledge receipt of the code of conduct.

AUTHORITY OF THE PRINCIPAL

The principal is the designated leader of the school and, in concert with the staff, is responsible for the orderly operation of the school. In cases of disruptive, disorderly or dangerous conduct not covered in this Code, the principal may undertake corrective measures which he or she believes to be in the best interest of the student and the school provided any such action does not violate school board policy or procedures.

TEACHER AUTHORITY

The Superintendent fully supports the authority of principals and teachers in the school system to remove a student from the classroom pursuant to provisions of state law.

Each teacher shall comply with the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 20-2-737, which requires the filing of a report by a teacher who has knowledge that a student has exhibited behavior that repeatedly or substantially interferes with the teacher's ability to communicate effectively with the students in his or her class or with the ability of such student's classmates to learn, where such behavior is in violation of the student code of conduct. Such report shall be filed with the principal or designee on the school day of the most recent occurrence of such behavior, shall not exceed one page, and shall describe the behavior. The principal or designee shall, within one school day after receiving such a report from a teacher, send to the student's parents or guardian a copy of the report and information regarding how the student's parents or guardians may contact the principal or designee.

The principal or designee shall notify in writing the teacher and the student's parents or guardian of the discipline or student support services which has occurred as a result of the teacher's report within one school day from the imposition of discipline or the utilization of the support services. The principal or designee shall make a reasonable attempt to confirm that the student's parents or guardian has received the written notification, including information as to how the parents or guardian may contact the principal or designee.

PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES

When it is necessary to impose discipline, school administrators and teachers will follow a progressive discipline process. The degree of discipline to be imposed by each school official will be in proportion to the severity of the behavior of a particular student and will take into account the student's discipline history, the age of the student and other relevant factors.

The Code of Conduct provides a systematic process of behavioral correction in which inappropriate behaviors are followed by consequences. Disciplinary actions are designed to teach students self-discipline and to help them substitute inappropriate behaviors with those that are consistent with the character traits from Georgia's Character Education Program.

The following actions may be imposed for any violation of this Code of Conduct:

- Warning and/or conference with a school administrator, counselor or social worker
- Loss of privileges
- Time out
- Removal from class or activity
- Notification of parents
- Parent conference
- Corporal punishment
- Detention
- In-school suspension
- Short-term suspension
- Placement in an alternative education program

- Referral to a disciplinary tribunal for long-term suspension or expulsion
- Suspension or expulsion from the school bus
- *[Other options available to the school or district]*

Referral to law enforcement or juvenile court officials: Georgia law requires that certain acts of misconduct be referred to the appropriate law enforcement officials. The school will refer any act of misconduct to law enforcement officials when school officials determine such referral to be necessary or appropriate.

The maximum punishments for an offense include long-term suspension or expulsion, including permanent expulsion, but those punishments will be determined only by a disciplinary tribunal or hearing officer as outlined in Code Section 20-2-754.

Parents or students may elect not to contest whether a student has violated the Code of Conduct or the appropriate discipline, and in such cases, an agreement may be negotiated which would include the parents or students waiving a right to a hearing before a disciplinary tribunal or hearing officer. Such an agreement and waiver must be approved also by the disciplinary tribunal or hearing officer.

Before a student is suspended for ten days or less, the principal or designee will inform the student of the offense for which the student is charged and allow the student to explain his or her behavior. If the student is suspended, the student's parents will be notified if possible. School officials may involve law enforcement officials when evidence surrounding a situation necessitates their involvement or when there is a legal requirement that an incident be reported.

School officials may search a student if there is reasonable suspicion the student is in possession of an item that is illegal or against school rules. Students vehicles brought on campus, student book bags, school lockers, desks and other school property are subject to inspection and search by school authorities at any time without further notice to students or parents. Cell phones/multi-media/electronic devices taken from students due to possession and/or use in violation of school rules are subject to having their contents searched. Students are required to cooperate if asked to open book bags, lockers or any vehicle brought on campus. Metal detectors and drug or weapon sniffing dogs may be utilized at school or at any school function, including activities that occur outside normal school hours or off the school campus at the discretion of administrators.

BEHAVIOR THAT WILL RESULT IN DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

The degree of discipline imposed will be in accordance with the progressive discipline process unless otherwise stated.

Possession, sale, transmission, use in any amount, distribution, or being under the influence of any narcotic drug, hallucinogenic drug, amphetamine, barbiturate, marijuana, drug paraphernalia, or alcoholic beverage, intoxicant, inhalant, prescription drug not currently prescribed, or substance that creates the same effect of the items listed;

Possession, distribution, attempted sale or sale of substances represented as drugs or alcohol or any of the other items listed above

Sale, attempted sale, distribution, or being under the influence of a prescription or over the counter drug Possession or use of a weapon, as provided for in Code Section 16-11-127.1:

A student shall not possess, use, handle, or transmit any object that reasonably can be considered a weapon. Weapons may include, but are not limited to:

1. Any handgun, firearm, rifle, shotgun or similar weapon; any explosive compound or incendiary device; or, any other dangerous weapon as defined in O.C.G.A. § 16-11-121, including a rocket launcher, bazooka, recoilless rifle, mortar, or hand grenade.
2. Any hazardous object, including any dirk, bowie knife, switchblade knife, ballistic knife, any other knife having a blade of two or more inches, straight-edge razor, razor blade, spring stick, knuckles, whether made from metal, thermoplastic, wood, or other similar material, blackjack, any bat, club, or other bludgeon-type weapon, or any flailing instrument consisting of two or more rigid parts connected in such a manner as to allow them to swing freely, which may be known as a nun chahka, nun chuck, nunchaku, shuriken, or fighting chain, or any disc, of whatever configuration, having at least two points or pointed blades which is designed to be thrown or propelled and which may be known as a throwing star or oriental dart, or any instrument of like kind, any nonlethal air gun, and any stun gun or taser. Such term shall not include any of these instruments used for classroom work authorized by the teacher.

Students who possess any weapon described in paragraph 1 will be subject to a minimum of a one calendar year expulsion. The Superintendent shall have the authority either before or after the student is referred for a tribunal hearing to reduce the mandated one-year expulsion under circumstances where the one-year expulsion appears excessive to the Superintendent. The tribunal shall also have the authority to modify such expulsion requirement on a case-by-case basis in determining the appropriate punishment.

Students who possess other weapons or hazardous objects as described in paragraph 2 will be subject to discipline as determined by the principal to be appropriate based on the seriousness of the offense, the age of the student and other relevant factors.

Verbal assault, including threats of violence or bodily harm and/or sexual assault or harassment, of teachers, administrators, other school personnel, other students, or persons attending school-related functions: Immediate suspension and automatic referral to a disciplinary tribunal if a student is alleged to have committed an assault upon a teacher or other school personnel; possible referral to a disciplinary tribunal if a student is alleged to have committed an assault upon another student or a person attending a school-related function.

Physical assault or battery, including sexual battery, of other students, or persons attending school-related functions: possible referral to a disciplinary tribunal if a student is alleged to have committed battery upon another student or a person attending a school-related function.

Physical violence against a teacher, school bus driver, or other school personnel:

(1) Immediate suspension and automatic referral to the disciplinary tribunal if a student is alleged to have committed an act of physical violence against a teacher or other school personnel: Expulsion for the remainder of the student's eligibility to attend public schools for acts of physical violence found by a tribunal to have intentionally made physical contact which causes physical harm to another unless such physical contact or physical harm was in defense of himself or herself, as provided in Code Section 16-3-21; or the Board may authorize the student to attend alternative school for the period of

the expulsion; provided, however, that if such student is in kindergarten through grade six, then the Board upon the recommendation of the tribunal may permit the student to re-enroll in regular programs for grades 9 through 12; and provided further that if the Board does not operate an alternative education program for grades kindergarten through grade six, then the Board may permit the student in kindergarten through grade six who commits such an act to re-enroll in the public school system. The student shall be referred to juvenile court with a request for a petition alleging delinquent behavior.

(2) Possible punishments may include expulsion, long-term suspension, or short-term suspension for students found by a tribunal to have intentionally made physical contact of an insulting or provoking nature with the person of another.

Bus Misbehavior

The following specific provisions shall govern student conduct and safety on all school buses:

(1) All provisions of the Student Code of Conduct apply to behavior on the school bus, including but not limited to, acts of physical violence as defined by Code Section 20-2-751.6, bullying as defined by subsection (a) of the Code Section 20-2-751.4, physical assault or battery of other persons on the school bus, verbal assault of other persons on the school bus, disrespectful conduct toward the school bus driver or other persons on the school bus and other unruly behavior;

(2) A meeting of the parent or guardian of the student and appropriate school district officials must be held to form a school bus behavior contract whenever:

- A student is found to have engaged in bullying; or
- A student is found to have engaged in physical assault or battery of another person on the school bus.

The school bus behavior contract shall provide for age-appropriate discipline, penalties, and restrictions for student misconduct on the bus. Provisions may include, but are not limited to, assigned seating, ongoing parental involvement and suspension from riding the bus.

These provisions regarding use of a bus behavior contract are not to be construed to limit the instances when other code of conduct violations may require use of a student bus behavior contract.

(3) Students shall be prohibited from using any electronic devices during the operation of a school bus, including but not limited to cell phones; pagers; audible radios, tape or compact disc players without headphones; or any other electronic device in a manner that might interfere with the school bus communication equipment or the school bus driver's operation of the school bus; and

(4) Students shall be prohibited from using mirrors, lasers, flash cameras, or any other lights or reflective devices in a manner that might interfere with the school bus driver's operation of the school bus.

Disrespectful conduct: including use of vulgar or profane language, toward teachers, administrators, other school personnel, other students, or persons attending school-related functions.

Any behavior based on a student's race, national origin, sex, or disability that is unwelcome, unwanted, and/or uninvited by the recipient is prohibited, including verbal or non-verbal

taunting, physical contact, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature, up to and including sexual harassment as used in connection with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

Transmitting sexually explicit or suggestive material to other students at school or circulating such material at school through electronic devices or in any other manner.

Violating the school's/school system's acceptable use of the Internet/electronic resources agreement/policy.

Possession or use of tobacco in any form; electronic cigarettes vape, or any related device and the paraphernalia related to any of these items.

Damaging or defacing personal property, including the property of another student or any person legitimately at the school, or school property (vandalism or graffiti) during school hours or off-school hours.

Theft

Extortion or attempted extortion

Possession and/or use of fireworks or any explosive

Activating a fire alarm under false pretenses or making a bomb threat

Insubordination, disorderly conduct, disobeying school rules, regulations or directives;

Disobeying directives given by teachers, administrators, or other school staff

Classroom and school disturbances

Violation of school dress code

Use of profane, vulgar, or obscene words or indecent exposure

Use during prohibited times of cell phone or other electronic communication device, except for reasons approved by an administrator or teacher

Inappropriate public displays of affection

Gambling or possession of gambling devices

Driving or parking permit violations

Giving false information to school officials

Falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting, or erroneously reporting information regarding instances of alleged inappropriate behavior by a teacher, administrator, or other school employee toward a student Any student (or parent or friend of a student) who believes a student has been the victim of an act of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct by a teacher, administrator or other school system employee is urged to make an oral report of the act to any teacher, counselor or administrator at his/herschool.

Cheating on school assignments or other academic dishonesty

Unexcused absence, chronic tardiness, skipping class, leaving campus without permission, failure to comply with compulsory attendance law

Bullying: Georgia law mandates that upon a tribunal finding that a student in grades 6-12 has committed the offense of bullying for the third time in a school year, the student shall be assigned to an alternative school.

Inciting, advising or counseling of others to engage in prohibited acts.

Willful and persistent violations of the student code of conduct.

Criminal law violations/Off-campus misconduct: A student whose conduct off campus could result in the student being criminally charged with a felony and which makes the student's continued presence at school a potential danger to persons or property at the school or which disrupts the educational process may be subject to disciplinary action, including in-school suspension, short-term suspension or referral to a disciplinary tribunal.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Assault: Any threat or attempt to physically harm another person or any act which reasonably places another person in fear of physical harm. (Example: threatening language or swinging at someone in an attempt to strike).

Battery: Intentionally making physical contact with another person in an insulting, offensive, or provoking manner or in a way that physically harms the other person.

Bullying: In accordance with Georgia law, bullying is defined as an act which occurs on school property, on school vehicles, at school bus stops, or at school related functions or activities, or by use of data or software that is accessed through a computer, computer system, computer network, or other electronic technology of a local school system, that is:

(1) Any willful attempt or threat to inflict injury on another person, when accompanied by an apparent present ability to do so;

(2) Any intentional display of force such as would give the victim reason to fear or expect immediate bodily harm; or

(3) Any intentional written, verbal, or physical act, which a reasonable person would perceive as being intended to threaten, harass, or intimidate, that:

- (A) Causes another person substantial physical harm within the meaning of Code Section 16-5-23.1 or visible bodily harm as such term is defined in Code Section 16-5-23.1;
- (B) Has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's education;
- (C) Is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating or threatening educational environment; or
- (D) Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.

Chronic Disciplinary Problem Student: A student who exhibits a pattern of behavioral characteristics which interfere with the learning process of students around him or her and which are likely to recur.

Corporal Punishment: Physical punishment of a student by a school official in the presence of another school official.

Detention: A requirement that the student report to a specified school location and to a designated teacher or school official to make up work or time missed. Detention may require the student's attendance before school or after school.

Disciplinary Tribunal: School officials appointed by the School District to sit as fact finder and judge with respect to student disciplinary matters.

Dress Code: Acceptable standards of dress code as explained in the student handbook or through other means.

Drug: The term drug does not include prescriptions issued to the individual, aspirin or similar medications and/or cold medications that are taken according to product use recommendations or that are allowed under board policy or school rules. Caffeine pills are considered drugs.

Expulsion: Suspension of a student from a public school beyond the current school quarter or semester. Such action may be taken only by a disciplinary tribunal or hearing officer in accordance with Code Section 20-2-754.

Extortion: Obtaining money or goods from another student by violence, threats, or misuse of authority.

Fireworks: Any combustible or explosive composition or any substance or combination of substances or article prepared for the purpose of producing a visible or audible effect by combustion, explosion, deflagration, or detonation, as well as articles containing any explosive or flammable compound and tablets and other devices containing an explosive substance.

Gambling: Engaging in a game or contest in which the outcome is dependent upon chance even though accompanied by some skill, and in which a participant stands to win or lose something of value.

In-School Suspension: Removal of a student from class (es) or the regular school program and assignment of that student to an alternative program isolated from peers.

Physical Violence: Intentionally making physical contact of an insulting or provoking nature with the person of another: or intentionally making physical contact which causes physical harm to another.

Suspension: Removal of a student from the regular school program for a period not to exceed 10 days (short-term) or for a period greater than 10 days (long-term, which may be imposed only by a disciplinary tribunal or hearing officer). During the period of suspension, the student is excluded from all school-sponsored activities including practices, as well as competitive events, and/or activities sponsored by the school or its employees.

Theft: The offense of taking or misappropriating any property, of another with the intention of depriving that person of the property, regardless of the manner in which the property is taken or appropriated.

Waiver: A waiver is an agreement not to contest whether a student has committed an infraction of the code of conduct and the acceptance of consequences in lieu of a hearing before a disciplinary tribunal.

Weapon: The term weapon is defined in Georgia's criminal Code Section 16-11-127.1, but for the purpose of this code of conduct includes any object that is or may be used to inflict bodily injury or to place another in fear for personal safety or well-being.

Student Support Process

Student support processes are designed to consider, as appropriate in light of the severity of the behavioral problem, support services available at each school, the school district and other public entities or community organizations which may assist students to address behavior problems. -

Towns County Middle School provides a variety of resources to help address student behavioral problems. These resources include Student Support Teams, school counselors, principal, chronic disciplinary problem student plans, and the Towns County Schools Attendance Protocol.

Parental Involvement Processes

Parental involvement processes are designed to enable parents, guardians, teachers and school administrators to work together to improve and enhance student behavior and academic performance. The process should enable parents, guardians and school employees to communicate freely their concerns about student behaviors which detract from the learning environment. School administrators recognize that two-way communication through personal contacts is extremely valuable; therefore, they provide information to parents, as well as ongoing opportunities for school personnel to hear parents' concerns and comments.

Parents and students should contact the principal of the school if specific questions arise related to the Code of Conduct.

The Code of Conduct specifies within its standards of behavior various violations of the Code which may result in a school staff member's request that a parent or guardian come to the school for a conference.

Parents are encouraged to visit the schools regularly and are expected to be actively involved in the behavior support processes designed to promote positive choices and behavior.

Georgia law mandates that any time a teacher or principal identifies a student as a chronic disciplinary problem student, the principal shall notify by telephone call and by mail the student's parent or guardian of the disciplinary problem, invite the parent or guardian to observe the student in a classroom situation, and request at least one parent or guardian to attend a conference to devise a disciplinary and behavioral correction plan.

Georgia law also states that before any chronic disciplinary problem student is permitted to return to school from a suspension or expulsion, the school shall request by telephone call and by mail at least

one parent or guardian to schedule and attend a conference to devise a disciplinary and behavioral correction plan.

The law allows a local board of education to petition the juvenile court to require a parent/guardian to attend a school conference. If the court finds that the parent or guardian has willfully and unreasonably failed to attend a conference requested by the principal pursuant to the laws cited above, the court may order the parent or guardian to attend such a conference, order the parent or guardian to participate in such programs or such treatment as the court deems appropriate to improve the student's behavior, or both. After receiving notice and an opportunity for a hearing, the court may impose a fine, not to exceed \$500.00, on a parent or guardian who willfully disobeys an order of the court under this law.

Towns County Middle School shall involve parents in updating student codes of conduct. Each code shall require disciplinary action for each infraction of the code.

Attendance

Truant - any child subject to compulsory attendance who during the calendar year has more than five days of unexcused absences.

Attendance problems such as truancy, excessive tardiness without a legal excuse, and/or checking out of school early without a legal excuse will result in disciplinary action by the school including, but not limited to:

- Detentions;
- In-school Suspension;
- Declaring a student ineligible to participate in extracurricular activities;
- Referral of students age six (6) sixteen (16) to Juvenile Court for truancy and/or as an unruly youth;
- Referral of students age fourteen and older to the Department of Motor Vehicles for the suspension or denial of instructional and drivers licenses;
- Referral of the parent/guardian to State Court for Failure to comply with the Compulsory Attendance provisions of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated(O.C.G.A.).
- Referral of the parent/guardian to the Department of Family and Children Services for suspicion or indications of abuse/neglect.

STUDENT SUPPORT PROCESSES

The Board of Education provides a variety of resources that are available at every school within the district to help address student behavioral problems. The school discipline process will include appropriate consideration of support processes to help students resolve such problems. These resources include Student Support Teams, attendance support teams, school counselors, and chronic disciplinary problem student plans.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

This Towns County Middle School Student Code of Conduct is based on the expectation that parents, guardians, teachers, and school administrators will work together to improve and enhance student behavior and academic performance and will communicate freely their concerns about, and actions in response to, student behavior that detracts from the learning environment. School administrators recognize that a two-way communication through personal contact is extremely valuable; therefore, they provide information to parents as well as on-going opportunities for school personnel to hear parents' concerns and comments.

Parents and students should contact the principal of the school if specific questions arise related to the Towns County Middle School Student Code of Conduct.

The Towns County Middle School Student Code of Conduct specifies within its standards of behavior various violations of the Code which may result in a school staff member's request that a parent or guardian come to the

school for a conference. Parents are encouraged to visit the schools regularly and are expected to be actively involved in the behavior support processes designed to promote positive choices and behavior.

Georgia law mandates that any time a teacher or principal identifies a student as a chronic disciplinary problem student, the principal shall notify by telephone call and by mail the student's parent or guardian of the disciplinary problem, invite the parent or guardian to observe the student in a classroom situation, and request at least one parent or guardian to attend a conference to devise a disciplinary and behavioral correction plan.

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SCHOOL SPONSORED CLUBS

School sponsored clubs (excluding competitive interscholastic activities or events) are those under the sponsorship, direction and control of the school that organize and meet for common goals, objectives, and purposes. State law requires that parents have the right to withhold permission for their students to participate in any school sponsored club or organization designated by them. You as the parent/guardian, have the right to withhold in writing your permission for your student's participation in any club or organization. For your convenience, a form is included in this handbook, if you do not wish for your student to participate in the club you have designated on the form. If a club is added during the school year, you will be provided information on the club and your written permission will be required prior to your student's participation. Current clubs/organizations offered at TCMS are: Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA), Junior FBLA, Junior HOSA, TCMS Fishing Club, Future Farmers of America (FFA), and Robotics.

BULLYING

Bullying is defined as follows: An act that is

1. Any willful attempt or threat to inflict injury on another person, when accompanied by an apparent present ability to do so;
2. Any intentional display of force such as would give the victim reason to fear or expect immediate bodily harm; or
3. Any intentional written, verbal, or physical act, which a reasonable person would perceive as being intended to threaten, harass, or intimidate, that:
 - a. Causes another person substantial physical harm within the meaning of Code Section 16-5-23.1 or visible bodily harm as such term is defined in Code Section 16-5-23.1;
 - b. Has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's education;
 - c. Is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating or threatening education environment; or
 - d. Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.

The term "bullying" applies to acts which occur on school property, on school vehicles, at designated school

bus stops, or at school related functions or activities or by use of data or software that is accessed through a computer, computer system, computer network, or electronic technology of a local school system. The term also applies to acts of cyberbullying which occur through the use of electronic communication, whether or not electronic act originated on school property or with school equipment, if the electronic communication

1. is directed specifically at students or school personnel
2. is maliciously intended for the purpose of threatening the safety of those specified or substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school, and
3. creates a reasonable fear of harm to the students' or school personnel's person or property or has a high likelihood of succeeding in that purpose. Electronic communication includes, but is not limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writings, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo electronic, or photo optical system.

DRUG SCREENING POLICY

The Towns County Board of Education firmly believes that the use and abuse of drugs that are not prescribed or used as prescribed are detrimental to the physical, emotional and mental well-being of its students. The Board further believes that this abuse seriously interferes with the academic and athletic performance of students and creates an unhealthy learning environment. These concerns have prompted the Board to authorize the Superintendent and his staff to develop and implement drug screening procedures for all students who wish to participate in any interscholastic athletic activity or any interscholastic extracurricular activity.

I. Definitions

- A. Alcohol shall mean any beverage, mixture, or preparation, including any medication or other products, containing alcohol or ethanol.
- B. Chain of Custody refers to the procedures for maintaining control and accountability from initial collection to final disposition for all such materials or substances and providing for accountability at each stage in handling, testing, and storing specimens and reporting test results.
- C. Drugs shall mean any substance screened for under the policy and shall include, without limitation, alcohol, amphetamines, anabolic steroids, barbiturates, benzodiazepines, cocaine, marijuana, methadone, methaqualone, opiates, phencyclidine, and propoxyphene.
- D. Specimen means urine, tissue, hair, or a product of the human body capable of revealing the presence of drugs or their metabolites, as approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration or the Agency for Health Care Association.
- E. A Participating Student is any student enrolled in Towns County Middle School or Towns County High School who participates in or applies for participation in any interscholastic athletic program or extracurricular activity or who parks a vehicle on school property.
- F. Privileged Activity encompasses all high school and middle school interscholastic sports, extracurricular activities and parking a vehicle on school property.

II. Drug Screening Procedures

- A. **Consent:** Each participating student and his or her parents are required to sign a written consent for drug testing form prior to being allowed to participate in any privileged activity. Any random drug testing done throughout the course of the school year will be paid for by the school. Any refusal by a

participating student to be tested shall constitute a violation of this policy.

- B. **Medication:** Participating students who have been selected for drug testing and who are or have been taking prescription or non-prescription medication should disclose that fact at the time of drug testing and upon request, provide verification. This verification may be done by either submitting a copy of the prescription or by the physician's written authorization.
- C. **Selection Process:** Drug testing of participating students shall occur at various times throughout the school year. Individuals will be selected at random using a numerical selection process where each participating student's name and identity remain unknown until the random selections are completed. The random selection will occur monthly throughout the school year. The random drawing of participating students will be performed by the contracting body and provided to the Towns County High School or Towns County Middle School administration. This method is to ensure fairness and confidentiality for students. Retesting of participating students following a first offense or first positive drug test will occur at times not previously disclosed to the participating student to deter the participating student from committing a subsequent violation.
- D. **Specimen Collection Procedures:** Procedures for the collections, testing and result verification of specimens will be set forth by the testing facility contracted with to perform such services and will be distributed to all the students. The testing for our students will be conducted in private under the supervision of the school nurse. The method of testing for our students will utilize an oral fluid test which involves the student's collection of saliva on a collection pad (swab). The collection pad (swab) will be collected and read immediately at time of testing by the school nurse.
- E. **Guidance Counselor:** The designated counselor will receive all reports of positive drug test results and will be supplied with information to determine the correct name of each participating student whose identifying number appears on a positive test result report.
- F. **Appeal:** A participating student who has tested positive and whose test results the Guidance Counselor has been forwarded to the school principal or his or her designee for the imposition of action provided under policy IDF shall be entitled to appeal such a decision to the school principal. The principal's decision can be appealed only to the Towns County Board of Education.

III. General Provisions and Penalties

- A. **Standard of Conduct for Participating Students:** The use or possession of a drug, as defined herein, by a participating student is both dangerous and detrimental to a student's ability to drive and participate in athletics or extracurricular activities and is hereby prohibited.
- B. **Penalties:** Any participating student whose drug test administered according to this policy renders a positive test result as indicated by the test or any participating student who otherwise violates this policy shall be subject to the following consequences:
 - **First Offense or First Positive Drug Test Result:** The participating student and his or her parents will be required to attend a conference held with one or more of the following staff members as determined by the Principal, Counselor, Athletic Director, or Principal's designee. If the student participates in extra-curricular activities including athletics, the student will be banned from 10% of the teams or groups games and activities beginning with the next scheduled contest. Student athletes may remain part of the team and will be expected to participate in the team practices and conditioning sessions. The student may not attend any overnight trips with the team or group during the suspension. If a student driver, the student will lose driving privileges for 15 school days. The participating student will be required to offer evidence of participation in a drug assessment/counseling program within 30 days of a

positive test result. The participating student will be subject to recurring drug tests at times not to be previously disclosed to the participating student to deter the participating student from committing a subsequent violation of this policy.

- **Second Offense or Second Positive Test Result:** The participating student will be suspended from participating in privileged activities for 45 days. The participating student may reapply to the athletic director or principal for reinstatement of his/her eligibility to participate in privileged activities only after a negative test result is obtained and successful completion of an appropriate drug assessment/counseling program.
- **Subsequent Offense or Subsequent Positive Drug Test Results:** Upon determination of a third or subsequent positive drug test result, the participating student shall be prohibited from participation in all privileged activities for one full calendar year. At the end of the year in order for a student to be allowed to resume participation in privileged activities, the student must provide evidence of the successful completion of an appropriate drug assessment/counseling program and a negative test result from the school's testing program that was obtained after the year's prohibition.
- **Violations of the drug testing policy are:** Accumulative during a student's entire career at Towns County Middle School or Towns County High School; therefore, penalties will increase in severity for each violation that occurs while a student is enrolled at either of the schools. (Note: Violations are not carried over from the Middle School to the High School)

STUDENT DRESS CODE

Appropriate dress is essential to success in school and in the work-place; however, students are allowed a measure of freedom in choosing appropriate clothing to wear in school. Clothing should not be distracting or disruptive to the orderly and professional operation of the school. Students with inappropriate apparel will be sent to the office to correct the dress code violation. Appropriate dress includes but is not limited to the following:

1. Dresses, skirts and shorts should be at a length below your fingertips while standing.
2. Apparel with obscene or suggestive language, pictures or language that promotes alcohol, drugs, tobacco, racism or hatred are not permitted.
3. Tank tops are not permitted.
4. Students must wear shoes.
5. Hats, hoods, stocking caps, bandannas, sunglasses and other headgear may not be worn.
6. No student should dress in such a way that his/her underwear is partially or totally visible. Waist and top portions of boxer shorts and briefs, panties, bra straps, bralettes and sides may not be shown or visible. Pajama pants are not permitted.
7. No student may wear clothes with holes anywhere above the fingertip length while standing.
8. Blouses, dresses, skirts, or shirts which expose areas of the stomach, side, or back are not permitted.
9. Low cut, see through, strapless, or backless dresses/shirts may not be worn.
10. Girl's sleeveless tops must be as wide as your palm at the shoulder.
11. Compression pants, tight leggings or yoga type pants may not be worn without shorts, skirt or shirt being finger-tip length covering them.
12. Cheerleaders may wear uniforms on game days.
13. Blankets or full body coverings are not allowed.

NO APPAREL CAN BE WORN WHICH THE ADMINISTRATION DETERMINES TO BE UNACCEPTABLE BY COMMUNITY STANDARDS OR WHICH IS DISRUPTIVE TO NORMAL SCHOOL OPERATIONS.

CONSEQUENCES FOR VIOLATION OF DRESS CODE:

1. The student will be asked to modify his/her attire without leaving campus or will be offered something furnished by the principal to wear to class. Choice Points will be taken.
2. If the attire cannot be modified to be in compliance, parents will be notified and asked to bring acceptable clothing to school. The student will be placed in ISS to complete schoolwork while awaiting the clothing.
3. The student may return home with the parent to correct their attire. Any absence from class is unexcused and the student may not receive credit for work made up upon their return.
4. In School (ISS) and then Out of School Suspension (OSS) for 1-3 days for repeated offenses.

DRUG FREE SCHOOL ZONE ACT

It is illegal to engage in drug activity in a school safety zone. An individual convicted will be guilty of a felony and imprisoned for up to 20 years and/or fined up to \$20,000 for a first offense.

SCHOOL BUS TRANSPORTATION

The Towns County School District provides bus transportation to those locations which buses may access safely. Students are expected to observe all rules appropriate in school while on the bus in addition to the following:

1. Any problems on the school bus should first be reported to the bus driver.
2. Only ordinary conversation is permitted. No loud talking or yelling.
3. Students must refrain from throwing anything.
4. Students must not put any part of their body out of the windows.
5. Only administrators or bus driver may assign seats.
6. No eating or drinking is allowed.
7. Vandalism may result in bus suspension until damages are paid for.
8. A student who sets off the emergency alarm or opens an emergency door may be assigned ISS and/or face other disciplinary consequences.
9. A student who opens an emergency door on a moving bus may be assigned OSS.
10. Students may only be picked up and dropped off at their homes unless a Transportation Request form is signed by the parent in the office in advance. Serious disciplinary problems on the school bus may result in the suspension of bus riding privileges. This does not excuse the student from attending school.

IV. GENERAL STUDENT INFORMATION

CHANGE IN ADDRESS OR TELEPHONE NUMBER

It is critical that the school knows how to contact parents in an emergency. If a change in address or phone number occurs, the school should be contacted immediately.

ELIGIBILITY RULES

Towns County Middle School students participating in extracurricular activities must take four academic classes and two exploratory classes and pass a minimum of five classes in the semester immediately preceding participation. Exploratory classes shall be averaged to count as one subject for eligibility purposes. Second semester students not meeting this requirement will be ineligible for one semester and remain ineligible until they pass five subjects preceding participation.

FIRST AID/ILLNESS

Students who require first aid or who become ill during the school day should report to their regularly scheduled class and obtain a hall pass to the nurse's clinic or to phone home in the office.

FOOD SERVICE

The cafeteria is operated without profit for the benefit of students. Students are expected to assist in keeping the cafeteria clean; therefore, they are responsible for cleaning up their own tables and spillage. Students are expected to keep the noise level down and maintain reasonable cleanliness of the lunchroom.

Breakfast (K-12) Full Pay: \$2.00, Reduced Price: \$.30, Staff: \$2.50, Visitors: \$3.00

Lunch (6-12) Full Pay: \$2.50, Reduced Price: \$.40, Staff: \$4.50, Visitors: \$5.00.

Special meals are provided for any student when prescribed by a medical doctor only. An official document from the doctor must be given to the principal.

During the lunch period students must stay in the lunchroom. To help maintain a safe environment, no student may leave the campus to eat lunch at another location. No food or drink can be brought except for specific activities, which are approved by the faculty member in charge of the class.

Parents are strongly encouraged to submit a free or reduced meal application on or before the first day of school each school year. Parents must reapply each school year. Meal applications will be mailed out in July to every student enrolled in Towns County Schools. Meal applications are also available online at <https://family.titank12.com/>, and at each school's front office. You may also contact the Nutrition Department for an application.

The charge limit for all meals is \$10.00. Parents are encouraged to prepay for student meals if not approved for free meals. Students are not allowed to charge any extra items, only the meal. Once a student reaches the \$10.00 charge limit and payment has not been provided the student will receive an alternative meal. Students will receive an alternative meal until all charges are paid or the student has cash to pay daily.

Families will be notified of their student(s) charges weekly or biweekly by phone, email, text message or automated call to the phone number on file with the school. Please make sure to update all phone numbers and addresses each school year so that we may contact you. To prevent your student(s) from acquiring unwanted meal charges parents are strongly encouraged to set up online reminders and payment options at <https://family.titank12.com/>. For help with setting up the online account please contact the Nutrition Department.

Employees of Towns County School System are allowed to charge meals and extra items to their lunchroom accounts. The charge limit for employees is \$75.00. Charges need to be paid at the end of each month. If charges are not paid in full by the end of the school year the total amount owed will be deducted from the employee's paycheck.

Notice for Language and Disability Assistance for the School Nutrition Program

If you have difficulty communicating with us or understanding this information because you do not speak English or have a disability, please let us know. Contact (Becky Mullins). Free language assistance or other aids and services are available upon request.

Spanish Español:

Si tiene dificultades para comunicarse con nosotros, o para entender esta información porque no habla inglés o tiene alguna discapacidad, por favor infórmenos. Comuníquese con (Becky Mullins). Tenemos disponibilidad de servicios gratuitos de ayuda en otros idiomas y otro tipo de asistencia y servicios cuando lo solicite.

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits.

Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at <https://www.ascr.usda.gov/filing-program-discrimination-complaint-usda-customer>, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
 - (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
 - (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.
- This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

AGENDA PLANNER

All students will carry an agenda. Students will keep assignments current in the agenda. Students may be required to use their agenda as a hall pass. If students lose their agenda, they must pay for a replacement agenda. Agenda replacement cost is \$5.00.

CHOICE POINTS

Choice Points is a behavior system that will be used throughout the school year. Each student's agenda will contain a behavior sheet for the points to be calculated. This system will be used as a positive classroom management tool. It does not take the place of our school discipline policy or procedures. Rewards for the behavior system will be offered throughout the year and students are strongly encouraged to maintain their points at a high level.

DESIGNATED AREAS

Students are to remain on the Middle School Side of the building unless they are going to or coming from a connections class, or unless they have permission from a teacher to be in another area. Disciplinary actions will be taken for violations.

INSURANCE

School insurance is available for purchase during the first two weeks of the new school year. Students and parents should be aware that the insurance is limited.

Insurance is required for participation in athletic teams. Personal insurance is acceptable.

TEXTBOOKS

Textbooks are issued to students with their condition noted by the teacher. It is the responsibility of each student to take proper care of this school property. Missing or damaged textbooks will be paid for by the student based on the condition when issued.

LOCKERS

A locker is assigned to every student and furnished with a pad lock rented for **\$5.00**. This prevents students from having to carry their notebooks and textbooks all day long. Students must keep lockers locked at all times and not give combinations to anyone. Student lockers are considered the property of Towns County Schools and may be searched by the Administration at any time during the school year. The school does not assume responsibility for the contents of a student's locker if the items are stolen or lost.

LOST AND FOUND

Found articles are kept in the cafeteria lost and found designated area.

MEDICATION and SPECIAL HEALTH NEEDS

If students need to take prescription or over the counter medications during the school day, the medication must be left with the school nurse with a consent form completed by parents authorizing the school to administer the medication as prescribed by the doctor.

An auto-injectable epinephrine is defined as a disposable drug delivery device that is easily transportable and contains a premeasured single dose of epinephrine used to treat life-threatening allergic reactions. In order for a student to carry and self-administer prescription auto-injectable epinephrine, the student's parent or guardian shall provide: A written statement from a licensed physician detailing the name of the medication, method, amount and time schedules by which the medication is to be taken and confirming that the student is able to self-administer auto-injectable epinephrine. A written statement by the parent or guardian consenting to the self-administration, providing a release for the school nurse or other designated school personnel to consult with the physician regarding any questions that may arise with regard to the medication and releasing the school system and its employees and agents from civil liability if the self-administering student suffers an adverse reaction as a result of self-administering auto-injectable epinephrine pursuant to Georgia law. The written statements specified in this subsection shall be provided at least annually and more frequently if the medication, dosage, frequency of administration, or reason for administration changes.

Any student who is authorized for self-administration of epinephrine pursuant to this Code section may possess and use auto-injectable epinephrine; while in school; at a school sponsored activity; while under the supervision of school personnel; or while in before-school or after-school care on school operated property. To protect the safety of all students, the misuse or abuse of auto-injectable epinephrine will be considered a Level One violation of the Towns County Middle School Code of Conduct.

Students with special health needs must make these known to their teacher and principal so that a notation can be made in school records. A student health form along with a letter of explanation will be made available to parents.

MONEY AND OTHER VALUABLES

Students should leave money and other valuables at home except for that which is necessary for school. The school will **not** be responsible for money left in clothes, dressing rooms, and lockers or unattended in the classroom or other places on the school grounds. Students in the gym may ask the PE teacher or coach to hold valuables for them.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND 60 SECONDS OF SILENCE

In accordance with Georgia Law, the opportunity is afforded daily for reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America followed by 60 seconds of silence daily.

TELEPHONES

Telephones in all offices are for school business only, unless an emergency situation arises. Personal business should be taken care of before or after school hours. Personal messages will not be forwarded to the students during school hours.

CELL PHONES

Cell phone use is not allowed throughout the school day. Students are asked to keep their cell phone in their locker during the school day. Cell phones can only be used before and after regular school hours before 7:30 and after 3:30. Violators will have their phones taken and returned at the end of the school day or returned to a parent for repeat offenders.

VISITORS

Parents and other visitors must enter at the front of the school and immediately check in at the reception desk in the office to obtain a visitor's pass before visiting on campus. A parent/guardian may, on special occasions, eat with their student only at a designated separate table. All visitors are subject to the rules and regulations of the school.

WITHDRAWAL FROM SCHOOL PROCEDURES

All withdrawals are handled by the records clerk. Parents must contact Mrs. Beatrice Thurman before withdrawal procedures can begin.

INTERNET AND E-MAIL USE

ACCEPTABLE USE AND INTERNET SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR THE COMPUTER NETWORK OF THE TOWNS COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM

The Towns County School System is pleased to make available to students access to interconnected computer systems within the District and to the Internet, the world-wide network that provides various means of accessing significant educational materials and opportunities.

In order for the Towns County School System to be able to continue to make its computer network and Internet access available, all students must take responsibility for appropriate and lawful use of this access. Students must understand that one student's misuse of the network and Internet access may jeopardize the ability of all students to enjoy such access. While the school's teachers and other staff will make reasonable efforts to supervise student use of network and Internet access, they must have student cooperation in exercising and promoting responsible use of this access.

Below are the Acceptable Use and Internet Safety Guidelines of the Towns County School System and the Data Acquisition Site that provides Internet access to the school district. Upon reading the guidelines and signing and returning the Student's Agreement as the students have been directed, each student will be given the opportunity to enjoy Internet access at school and is agreeing to follow the guidelines. If a student is under 18 years of age, he or she also must have his or her parents or guardians read the guidelines and sign the agreement. The Towns County

School System will not provide access to any student who, if 18 or older, fails to sign and submit the agreement to the school as directed or, if under 18, does not return the agreement as directed with the signatures of the student and his/her parents or guardians.

Listed below are the provisions of your agreement regarding computer network and Internet use. If you have any questions about these provisions, you should contact the **Technology Director and/or the Principal of the school in which your child attends**. If any user violates the guidelines, the student's access will be denied, if not already provided, or withdrawn and he or she may be subject to additional disciplinary action.

I. PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

By signing this agreement, you are agreeing not only to follow the rules in these guidelines, but are agreeing to refrain from any other misuse of the network that is not included in the guidelines, but has the effect of harming another or his or her property.

II. TERM OF PERMITTED USE

A student who submits to the school, as directed a properly signed agreement and follows the guidelines to which she or he has agreed will have computer network and Internet access during the course of the student's enrollment in the school.

III. ACCEPTABLE USES

A. Education Purposes Only. The Towns County School System is providing access to its computer networks and the Internet for *only* educational purposes. If you have any doubt about whether a contemplated activity is educational, you may consult with **Technology Director and/or the Principal of the school in which your child attends** to help you decide if a use is appropriate.

B. Unacceptable Uses of Network. Among the uses that are considered unacceptable and which constitute a violation of the guidelines are the following:

1. Uses that violate the law or encourage others to violate the law. Do not transmit offensive or harassing messages; offer or sale or use any substance the possession or use of which is prohibited by the school system student code of conduct; view, transmit or download pornographic materials or materials that encourage others to violate the law; intrude into the networks or computers of others; and download or transmit confidential, trade secret information, or copyrighted materials. Even if materials on the networks are not marked with the copyright symbol, you should assume that all materials are protected unless there is explicit permission on the materials to use them.
2. Uses that cause harm to others or damage to their property. For example, do not engage in defamation (harming another's reputation by lies); employ another's password or some other user identifier that misleads message recipients into believing that someone other than you is communicating or otherwise using his/her access to the network or the Internet; upload a worm, virus, "Trojan horse," "time bomb," or other harmful form of programming or vandalism; participate in "hacking" activities or any form of unauthorized access to other computers, networks, or information systems.
3. Uses that jeopardize the security of student access and of the computer network or other networks on the Internet. For example, do not disclose or share your password with others; do not impersonate another user.
4. Uses that are commercial transactions. Students and other users may not sell or buy anything over the Internet. You should not give others private information about you or others, including credit card numbers and social security numbers.

C. Network Etiquette. All users must abide by rules of network etiquette, which include the following:

- a. Be polite. Use appropriate language. No swearing, vulgarities, suggestive, obscene, belligerent, or threatening language.
- b. Avoid language and uses which may be offensive to other users. Do not use access to make, distribute, or redistribute jokes, stories, or material which is based upon slurs or stereotypes relating to race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, religion, or sexual orientation.
- c. Do not assume that a sender of e-mail is giving his or her permission for you to forward or redistribute the message to third parties or to give his/her e-mail address to third parties. This should only be done with permission or when you know that the individual would have no objection.
- d. Be considerate when sending attachments with e-mail (where this is permitted). Be sure that the file is not too large to be accommodated by the recipient's system and is in a format which the recipient can open.

IV. INTERNET SAFETY

A. General Warning: Individual Responsibility of Parents and Users. All users and their parents/guardians are advised that access to the electronic network may include the potential for access to materials inappropriate for school-aged students. Every user must take responsibility for his or her use of the computer network or Internet and stay away from these sites. Parents of minors are the best guide to materials to shun. If a student finds that other users are visiting offensive or harmful sites, he or she should report such use to Technology Director and/or the principal of the school in which your child attends.

B. Personal Safety. Be safe. In using the computer network and Internet, do not reveal personal information such as your home address or telephone number. Do not use your real last name or any other information which might allow a person to locate you without first obtaining the permission of a supervising teacher. Do not arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone you "meet" on the computer network or Internet without your parent's permission (if you are under 18). Regardless of your age, you should never agree to meet a person you have only communicated with on the Internet in a secluded place or in a private setting.

C. "Hacking" and Other Illegal Activities. It is a violation of these guidelines to use the school's computer network or the Internet to gain unauthorized access to other computers or computer systems, or to attempt to gain such unauthorized access. Any use which violates state or federal law relating to copyright, trade secrets, the distribution of obscene or pornographic materials, or which violates any other applicable law or municipal ordinance, is strictly prohibited.

D. Confidentiality of Student Information. Personally identifiable information concerning students may not be disclosed or used in any way on the Internet without the permission of a parent or guardian or, if the student is 18 or over, the permission of the student himself/herself. Users should never give out private or confidential information about themselves or others on the Internet such as home addresses, home telephone numbers, or particularly credit card numbers or Social Security numbers.

E. Active Restriction Measures. The school, either by itself or in combination with the Data Acquisition Site providing Internet access, will utilize filtering software or other technologies to prevent students from accessing visual depictions that are (i) obscene, (ii) child pornography, or (iii) harmful to minors. The school will also monitor the online activities of students, through direct observation and/or technological means, to ensure that students are not accessing such depictions or any other material which is inappropriate for minors.

V. PRIVACY

Network and Internet access is provided as a tool for your education. The Towns County School System reserves the right to monitor, inspect, copy, review and store at any time and without prior notice any and all usage of the computer network and Internet access and any and all information transmitted or received in connection with such

usage. All such information files shall be and remain the property of Towns County School System and no user shall have any expectation of privacy regarding such materials.

VI. FAILURE TO FOLLOW GUIDELINES

The user's use of the computer network and Internet is a privilege, not a right. A user who violates these guidelines shall, at a minimum, have his or her access to the computer network or Internet terminated, which Towns County School System may refuse to reinstate for the remainder of the student's enrollment in the school system. A user violates these guidelines by his/her own action or by assisting another user in violating these guidelines or by concealing another user's involvement in such activities. Further, if passwords are assigned, a user violates this agreement if he or she permits another to use his or her account or password to access the computer network and Internet, including any user whose access has been denied or terminated. The Towns County School System may also take other disciplinary action in any of the above-mentioned circumstances.

VII. ASSURANCES

The Towns County School System cannot provide an absolute assurance that students will be prevented from accessing inappropriate materials or sending or receiving objectionable communications. However, the district will ensure that all practicable precautions will be taken to keep students safe from illegal and/or inappropriate material. The district shall not be responsible for any claims, losses, damages or costs (including attorney's fees) of any kind suffered, directly or indirectly, by any user or his or her parent(s) or guardian(s) arising out of the user's use of its computer networks or the Internet under these guidelines.

MEDIA CENTER

The purpose of the Media Center is to serve the students, faculty and staff as a resource center, supporting and enriching the curriculum with a variety of materials and providing the opportunity for reading and research.

Students may check out materials from the Media Center at any time during its operating hours.

Students must have a hall pass to visit the Media Center. They must sign in when entering the center. The staff will sign and record each student's departure time on the hall passes as the student leaves to return to class.

Books at all grade levels are checked out for 1-2 weeks. Notices are given to teachers informing them of students with overdue books. Students are expected to pay full replacement price plus \$2.00 processing fees for books that are lost or not returned to the Media Center.

Students are expected to be quiet while in the Media Center, to be respectful to the staff, to take care of property and materials, to return materials on time, and to pay for damaged or lost items. Standard behavior expectations are enforced.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

In the event of emergency drills or an actual emergency, students are to follow the instructions of the teacher. Emergency procedures are posted in every room. Students should familiarize themselves with these procedures.

SNOW AND OTHER EMERGENCY CONDITIONS

The announcement call system is used to call all student primary contact numbers and school social media outlets will be updated.

When there are snowy or icy conditions, the following radio and television stations will announce school closings:

TV Channel 2

TV Fox 5

TV 11 Alive

TVCBS 46

WJUL 97.5FM and 1230 AM – Hiawassee Radio

Facebook, Parent Square, and the school website www.townscountyschools.org

School closing information may also be obtained by calling 896-4131 or by connecting to the school's web site at www.townscountyschools.org. We will also attempt to contact all student home telephone numbers through our automated system. Students should know what to do and where to go in the event of an early dismissal. Parents should discuss this with their children.



2022 – 2023 School Calendar

Teacher Pre-Planning	August 1-3, 2022
Open House	August 2, 2022
First Day of School	August 4, 2022
Labor Day Holiday	September 5, 2022
Progress Reports	September 7, 2022
End of 1st Nine Weeks (44 Days)	October 5, 2022
Progress Reports	October 12, 2022
Teacher Work Day	October 14, 2022
Fall Break	October 17, 2022
Progress Reports	November 9, 2022
Thanksgiving Holidays	November 21 – 25, 2022
End of 2nd Nine Weeks (45 Days)	December 16, 2022
End of 1st Sem./Early Release (88 Days)	December 16, 2022
Christmas Holidays	Dec 19, 2022 – Jan 2, 2023
Teacher Work Day	January 3, 2023
Students Return	January 4, 2023
MLK Day	January 16, 2023
Progress Reports	February 8, 2023
President's Day (Teacher Work Day)	February 20, 2023
End of 3rd 9 Weeks (46 Days)	March 10, 2023
Progress Reports	March 15, 2023
Spring Break	April 3 – 7, 2023
Progress Reports	April 19, 2023
End of 4th Nine Weeks (45 Days)	May 19, 2023
End of 2nd Sem./Early Release (91 Days)	May 19, 2023
Graduation	May 20, 2023
Teacher Post-Planning	May 22-25, 2023

180 Student Days 190 Teacher Days